



Refit has Owners Singing the Saggy Headliner Blues

Pactical Sailor recently received a letter from reader Mike Joseph who had purchased a derelict 1991 Beneteau First 235 as a rehab project boat. The biggest repair the boat required was replacing its saggy headliner, a common ailment of many used boats, particularly Beneteaus of the same vintage. We thought we'd share Mike's story as other readers are likely facing the same do-it-yourself fix. The following is from Mike's letter to PS.

"The purchase of a 'new-to-you' boat presents a mix of joy and challenge. For us, the discovery of a Beneteau First 235 sitting forlorn at a lake outside of Kansas City, Mo., was just such a mix. A repo due to a loan default had her sitting forgotten for several years, but the price was right.

"Other than the usual stuff—rain water in the bilge, flaky bottom paint, etc.—the glaring project would be replacing the sagging headliner. The foam backing on the original white vinyl liner turned to dust over time, leaving behind the very tenacious adhesive on the interior fiberglass.

"Consulting the forums on the F235 owner's website (www.beneteau235.com), we learned of several options for fixing the problem: re-adhere the existing vinyl liner; replace it with new foam-backed vinyl; paint the glass; stripe it with wood; or install carpet. Each had its pros and cons. We chose the latter, as we wanted a simple DIY project, a warmer sound inside the cabin, and a little insulation.

"We found yards of thin, flexible, ribbed carpet at a close-out price that closely matched the fabric Beneteau used on the lower hull interior. It was thin enough to form fit, but thick enough not to print through any adhesive."

Mike used a nylon-polyester blend indoor/outdoor carpet made by Beaulieu (www.beaulieu-usa.com), a division of Mohawk, but it's available under several brand names—including Vitality for retail and Front Runner (www.lockfast.com/fabricsfrontrunner.html) for commercial buyers—and is available in small sections from stores like Home Depot. Most retail carpet stores can order it but don't stock it.

Along with his first mate, Diann Holland, Mike spent several days scraping, sanding, and applying solvents (alcohol, acetone, and MEK) to remove the old liner and adhesive. He said the MEK did the trick, but warned that it'll dissolve the fiberglass if you leave it on too long. They used a fan to promote circulation while they worked in the cabin and also wore two-filter respirators.

After the crud was removed, the crew measured out the carpet panels, cutting them over size, then taping them in place and trimming to exact fit.

After protecting all other surfaces with newspaper, the team sprayed the fiberglass surfaces to be carpeted and the carpet back with 3M's Car Care General Trim Adhesive (Part 08088), which is available at auto parts stores. "Although it was messy and apt to get on damn near everything, it worked as advertised," Mike commented. "The trick was to line up the panels correctly; the pieces could be pulled away and re-positioned or stretched into place, but correct-the-first-time was best."

"Several years later, the carpet is still firmly in place. It looks great, and keeps the interior cozy and inviting. The end result was worth it!"



The crew protects adjacent surfaces with newspaper before spraying the adhesive for the carpet. Thin, flexible carpeting replaced the wornout vinyl headliner. Peregrine, a Beneteau First 235, sits on her mooring at Lake Giacomo, Mo.